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Atari Online News, Etc.
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Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Rob Mahlert
Kevin Savetz

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-* 'You Have Mail', And Most Of It Is Junk!! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Another new year is rapidly approaching! It's hard to believe that we're putting to bed the last issue of A-ONE in 2001, completing our third year of publication. Three years! It's people like you, the readers, who have really made it all possible. And, the folks like Joe, Rob, Scott, and TJ that regularly do a lot of work to make my life easier. Thanks to you all for making it happen week after week!

I hope that everyone is enjoying their holidays. It's been nice so far, and wrapping up in a few days. As usual, our choice here is to spend New Year's at home. And, we'll be on vacation! Time to unwind and relax. Maybe even get some indoor projects started, finally. Also an opportunity to play with some of my new "toys"!

Normally at this time of year, I'd reflect on what's been happening over the past year regarding things Atari; or, as in the recent past few years, perhaps do some reminiscing. Somehow it just doesn't seem appropriate this year. There have been too many other more important things to reflect rather than whine about what could have been, and what was. It's time to reflect upon what we do have - and I'm not referring to materialistic things.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable New Year's Eve, and a prosperous new year in 2002. And remember, if you're going to party, please do so responsibly. The life you save may be Joe's!

Until next time...

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XaAES 0.935 Released

Summary of changes in XaAES v0.935

1 Fixed a hole and a bug in the keyboard queue.
This solves problems with some editors.

Especially in combination with QED when keystrokes leaked into the
wrong window.

2 Some programs install an embedded resource only as array of tree pointers
in pb-globl. This is now detected and handled correctly.

This lets AUTOSORT.PRG work.

3 Somehow, sometime, the copying of the command of the shel_write got lost.
Reinserted it. It is the command line that is returned by shel_read().

4 Button event matching:
Apply mask on requested button state as well. :->
MJM now sees button events.

5 Right click on a arrow reverses the action.
Double click on a arrow slides to the appropriate end.
Both line and page arrows.

6 Small fix in check_widget_tree() and root object drawing in windowed
dialogues. (a flag got lost, resulting in drawing obsolete borders again)

http://xaaes.atari.org

New HighWire Browser Development Project

Hello all!

We are pleased to announce the HighWire Development Project web site.
http://highwire.atari-users.net

While NO DOWNLOADS are available at this time. There are some screen
shots and other info available for those interested. Downloads will be
available shortly. This is a chance for non programmers to get an idea of
how development is progressing and to book mark the site before the
initial release announcements are made.

HighWire is a New Atari Browser that is UNDER development. We are asking
anyone interested in helping code HighWire, in C, to join the group. We are
also looking for people experienced in translation and documentation, so
that the project can be available to as many Atari users as possible.
Without any hurdles due to language problems or documentation.

Please visit the developer section of the site for information on how to
join the list.

HighWire Development Project

Why take a taxi... When you can fly!

http://highwire.atari-users.net

UPDATE:

HighWire Version 0.01 Released!

The HighWire Development Team is pleased to announce the first public release of HighWire.

Please visit the HighWire Site to download.

http://highwire.atari-users.net

HighWire Development Team

TOPP - The Orphaned Projects Page

Through the years there have been many great applications there have been for the Atari computers through the years, but sadly many of these are at this point no longer maintained for neither bugfixes nor further developments.

So it would make sense to try and gather all sources we can from these abandoned projects, and in the future they might just even get a new maintainer.

I have therefore made contact with a few programmers who are no longer actively working on their projects (projects could be frozen on longterm basis or dead, reasons vary a lot) and started to make a list of projects, with easy downloads of sources as well as some license information which would be vital to anyone interesting in taking over a project.

Now, this project is not only for coders! On the site there is a wishlist, which is a list of the applications the site visitors consider to be abandoned and should be a target for TOPP. You can help out both through mailing in suggestions for applications, or get in touch with any author of relevant programs, mentioning this site to them. If you are the author of a program no longer maintained, do consider getting in touch about releasing the sources. (Especially if you have an application on the wishlist).

Make any sense? If yes, great, come help out! If no, visit the site to get a grip :))

http://topp.atari-users.net

MyMAIL1.53 Released

MyMAIL has been updated to Rev: 1.53.

Visit the MyMail page to download.

http://www2.tripnet.se/~erikhall/programs/mymail.html

CAB.OVL Updated!

Just one small change that allows you to log into sites like the Yahoo

Groups page. The problem was they now force the connection over a https connection and that was conflicting with a test in the CAB.OVL. It's fixed for that now and works to log into Yahoo Groups.

Version is 1.4401

Full package is available (however I only really updated the plain text doc file)

http://www.netset.com/~baldrick/ovl.html

Compute!'s First Book of Atari Graphics

Compute!'s First Book of Atari Graphics is now available on the Web -- full text and all the software. (With permission of the copyright holder.)

Kudos to Allan Bushman, who did the scanning and HTMLizing;
and Ron Hamilton for doing the code.

http://www.atariarchives.org/c1bag/

eBay Scam

Shoppers on online auction sites like eBay are getting burned trying to get their hands on hot items for Christmas, a Unit 10 Investigation revealed.

Salt Lake City residents Kerry and Brian Wagner were eager to get their 6-year-old son, Nick, a PlayStation 2 (PS2) for Christmas. The popular video game system was sold out in stores, so the couple went online.

On eBay, the couple found exactly what they were looking for, offered at $300 apiece -- retail value for a PS2.

"Can you say overstocked? We can!" the eBay ad read. "You are bidding on the Sony PlayStation 2 Xmas bundle picture below. New, sealed and unused."

The Wagners jumped at the chance and were delighted when an Airborne Express package arrived just a few weeks later -- until they opened the box. Inside the box they found only a picture of a PS2.

Go back and read that ad again. The key word is "picture." In their excitement to get one of the hottest Christmas gifts around, the Wagners, and 74 other buyers, were duped by tricky wording.

"What we bid on and what we purchased was the picture, and not the PlayStation," Kerry Wagner said.

It was a $300 lesson in proofreading.

But postal inspectors told 10News that a reasonable person would expect to get a PlayStation, and getting a picture instead is fraud.

10News reported that the person who posted the ad, Anthony Van Dean, is

also pushing X-Boxes and computer motherboards on eBay, all with the same wording.

By way of a post office box at an El Cajon boulevard Mail Boxes, Etc., 10News was able to trace Van Dean to an address in Clairemont. There, 10News found Tom Schaefer, Van Dean's former roommate.

Schaefer said Van Dean was a student at the University of California, San Diego. Smart, and computer savvy, Van Dean had very few scruples, according to Schaefer.

"He would have been the guy most likely to perpetrate something like that," Schaefer said.

Six months ago Van Dean was working as a manager for a downtown parking company, 10News reported. His records as an employee with the company were not made available to 10News.

But postal inspectors can get their hands on that information, along with records of postal drops at the post office box. Investigators said they plan to follow up on what the Unit 10 Investigation has found.

If you were a victim of this scam, or one like it, authorities ask that you report it immediately to the FBI's Internet Fraud Complaint Center.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, here we are at the last week of 2001. It's been quite a year. I'm not going to rehash all of it because your memory is probably at least as good as mine, but let's just say that I feel that we've been the victims of that old chinese curse: May you live in interesting times.

This issue also closes out our third year of publishing A-ONE, and I'd like to take a moment to thank Dana for being the driving force behind the magazine. Without his leadership, I doubt very highly that you'd be reading this now.

Rob Mahlert and Scott Dowdle also deserve thanks for their unending help with the website. The fact that we always seem to be a issue or two behind is my fault, not theirs.

We also picked up a new contributor this year. TJ Andrews is The Keeper of the Flame, and we look forward to more columns from him in the coming year.

And finally, I'd like to thank you, the reader, for giving us a reason to do what we do. I hope that the coming year brings you peace and prosperity.

Now let’s get on with the news and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Edward Baiz takes a moment to praise one of my favorite developers:

"Hello all, I would like to talk about something I received from Anodyne Software and that is SUPPORT. Roger Burrows, who owns and runs Anodyne, is one of the nicest | Atari retailers I have known since I became an Atarian."

Jim Logan tells Edward:

"Agree absolutely. I had a problem with the Hades also and Roger sorted it out."

Lonny Purcell adds:

"I can only second these comments - one of the best retailers (non stop) it’s been my pleasure to come across - if only all were like him!"

Hallvard Tangeraas adds his thoughts:

"I agree. I haven’t bought anything from him (yet), but even more reason to praise his support as I asked for help here on how to get a SCSI CD-ROM drive to work with an STe since I didn’t have a clue.
We mailed back and forth several times where he gave me lengthy and detailed help and comments, and answered all my silly questions.

And he didn’t go about it the usual salesman-way of mentioning his products non-stop, pressuring me to buy, buy, buy.
Contrary to popular salesman belief, this behaviour actually makes me *want to buy*, because he’s sincerely helpful without asking for anything in return! A true Atarian, eh?"

Martin Byttebier asks about the BoxKite file selector:

"Until recently I was using Freedom file selector but as I was getting more and more probs with it I’m using Boxkite (latest version) now.
The prob with Boxkite is that I can’t see the date.
I see something like this

```
browsers    <dir>  12
hugo.inf    1356   04
```

Normally I should get this

```
browsers    <dir>  11.12.1999  10:27
hugo.inf    1356   13.04.1999  20:55
```

It seems boxkite only display the month.
Anyone an idea about this.

ps. I’m doing this on a Hades running freeMiNT/N_AES 2.0.0"

Edward Baiz lends Martin a helping hand:

"I have and use BoxKite. Great program. At the bottom of the file selector there is a scroll control. Just slide it over and you will see the date and other info on the file in question."

Martin tells Edward:

"I think you missed the point. The fact is that I don't see the timestamp at all, only the month.

Anyway I found the problem. The culprit was dataform.cpx. Dataform.cpx was set to use the American way of showing dates, months/day/year. After I switched over to the Belgian way of showing dates, day/month/year, Boxkite displayed the timestamps correctly."

In this little blast-from-the-past, legendary code-writer Tom Hudson posts:

"I have been trying to get my old Mega 4 ST up and running again (it's been in the attic for years) and have run into a roadblock.

I have two Supra hard drives, a 20- and a 30-MB unit. They are ganged together with one of Supra's interface boards. They are split up into logical drives C, D, E and F. Everything boots OK, and I have a copy of the old A-RAM ramdisk in my startup sequence, which loads and initializes, and says it's drive G. This tells me that the other logical drives have initialized OK.

The only remaining problem is that something has happened to my desktop info and NO DRIVE ICONS appear at all. I can't remember how to get the drive icons back in this situation. Can anybody refresh my memory on this?"

Henk Robbers tells Tom:

"Menu: Options-->Install Devices
Don't forget to save the desktop.
Options-->Save Desktop"

Tom tells Henk:

"Hmmm. No, my system doesn't have that option. I have GEM/TOS dated 1986/1987, and the Options menu has:

Install Disk Drive (grayed out)
Install Application (grayed out)

Set Preferences
Save Desktop
Print Screen

What's really weird is that not even the floppy icons are showing up. Without them, I can't get the "Install Disk Drive" menu item to enable itself, because you have to have one of them selected to do that.

I opened the system and re-seated the ROMs, but still no joy. What's really weird is that occasionally on bootup, with the HDs powered off, the system will boot with no floppy icons. Sometimes it'll have the icons but if I open the A drive, the filenames are garbage characters.

I suspect this may be a sick computer...

If anyone has any suggestions for getting my drive icons back, I'd love to hear them."

Derryck Croker tells Tom:

"You can expect odd behaviour if you have unpowered drives plugged into the ACSI port, so your report of garbled filenames is correct."

Tom fires up the hard drive and tells us:

"This is something I never experienced back when I was using the ST routinely, I guess I never powered it up without the HDs running. Scared me a bit when it happened, I thought maybe the system had been sitting in the attic too long and some component had gone bad. I saw a similar report over in the st.tech newsgroup, where someone was trying to get a flaky HD going, so once I had mine running and the floppy problem went away, I assumed this was the same thing.

> Glad you've got it all working again! :-)

Me too. Kind of makes me wish I had a TT here as well so I could update some of my old software to take advantage of its better graphics capability -- I noticed that some people are still using Cyber Sculpt, which only runs in the ST resolutions. Probably wouldn't be a big deal to get it running in the higher resolution modes, if people are interested."

Francisco Fernandez jumps in and tells Tom:

"It's amazing to read the posting of one of the top programmers in the 16/32 bit Atari computers history. And still better, to have you back to the Atari users community :).

I have to say that I'm another proud owner of almost all of your Cyber Series. All original copies, of curse. Cad 3D 2 was purchased as long ago as 1989. I now that it is the ancestor of the now world wide famous 3D Studio!!!.

Yes, adapt your software to run in any GEM resolution, and multitask happily under Mint, even without providing new features, would give a hole new breath of life to our ancient computers, not to mention the clones or the hopefully forthcoming Pegasus (MC Coldfire 300 MHZ).

The task wouldn't be too hard with the source code and updated system documentation. I offer myself to help you to test it in some "advanced" graphic setup as a Falcon with Eclipse and ATI Rage IIc board. I neither doubt that quite a number of people would be interested in that upgrade and pay for it.

I expect another users to add here their opinion.

Finally I don't want to finish my posting without wishing the best for you and thank you for giving us such wonderful pieces of software."

Tom tells Francisco:

"No, I haven't touched the code since January of 1989, according to the timestamps on the files. I'm going through my old hard drives now,

locating all the various code and trying to see if I can get the stuff compiling again."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Tom:

"Wow, haven't been on Atari since 1989 and you return?! That must be some kind of a record! So what programs did you do on the PC?"

Tom tells Lyndon:

"Yeah, it probably is a record! If you want to see what I've been working on, go check out http://www.discreet.com/products/3dsmax/ -- It's the latest generation of our 3D animation software, and is the #1 such package in the world. I've wrapped up work on release 4 and am on a sabbatical of sorts as I get geared up to actually USE the darn thing, instead of just write code.

I have some ideas for cartoons that have been running through my head since I wrote CAD-3D, and they're finally going to get made.

Nobody has a TT emulator that runs on a PC, do they? Or, is there an ST emulator that would allow me to test the various resolutions? The initial phase would be pretty hard without something here that would allow me to do the trials on.

Having not kept up with the Atari hardware after moving to the PC, I'm intrigued about what kind of capabilities these machines have. I originally left the Atari market (reluctantly) after they failed to deliver on promised upgrades, like the math co-processor, faster processors, etc. for so long.

If you have any system documentation in electronic form, I'd love to get it.

If you want to email me anything, I took the anti-spam email name off my news reader and put my real email address on it, just remove the 'X' from the front of the email address.

The Atari software was the foundation for everything that I did later on the PC, and I'll never forget the fun I had creating it. I think it's great that there are people still using it, and if possible I'd enjoy making it more useful for you guys."

Francisco tells Tom:

"As far as I know, there are no working TT emulators, but there are some free ST emulators (some pretty faithful to the original) around that allow to use extended resolutions but no more colors or palette than the original computer (16/4096 in an STE). Then you could use it at, let's say, 1280x960x16 colours.

I'll write you about some of us that have TTs or clones and would be happy to act as beta testers for such a development.

Well, sadly it (Atari hardware) didn't evolve too much after 1990. I will try to summarize the (most common) models that appeared after that year:

1. Falcon (last computer made by Atari):

16 MHz 68030, 16 MHz 68882 (optional), 16 bit data bus
(this with ST compatibility in mind). Upgradable to 14 MB ST RAM.
32 MHz MC56001 DSP 20 Mips with 96 KB of ultra fast RAM. Can be used
for sound and graphics processing. It also has a blitter chip. Built
in video High color (16 bit palette). Max 16 bit color resolution:
640x240 or 320x480. Max 8 bit color resolution: 640x480. The Falcon
features an expansion 16bit direct to processor upgrade bus connector.
With a PCI to Falcon bus adaptor there is available the ATI 3D Charger
(Rage IIc) PCI accelerator Card.

Many people have their Falcons upgraded with other expansion boards,
mainly with 68030 50 Mhz or 68040 33 Mhz. These admit TT RAM up to
64 MB at least.

There is planned a 68060 - 100 Mhz upgrade board.

2. Hades
Similar concept to the TT, modified TOS 3.06. MC68040/33 MHz or
MC68060/66 MHz PCI ET6000 graphic card. A lot of RAM (I think that up
to 512 MB).

3. Milan
Another TT clone, this time 32 bit RAM is treated as ST RAM for better
compatibility. MC68040/25 MHz or MC68060/33? MHz. RAM up to 128 MB. PCI
S3 Trio 64 v+ graphic card.

As you can see all these models are capable of 24bit color depths in
640x480 resolution and at least 800x600 pixels with 16 bit color depth.

As I mentioned earlier, a new computer (codenamed Pegasus) is under
development by Hades designers with AGP graphics card and MC Coldfire -
300 MHz. This processor has a subset of 68000 instructions (more than
80%). According with Motorola estimations and with both processors
running code within that subset (I mean that the Coldfire has not to
emulate the missing 68000 instructions), a 300 MHZ Coldfire benchmarks
up to a thousand times faster than ST’s original 8 MHz 68000. Also
worth mentioning, Pegasus is going to feature a Motorola DSP (56301)
PCI card as standard.

I will do it (send email) for sure, but I preferred to reply this time
in the newsgroup to allow other users to share their info and
contribute. Come on all you!!!

perhaps they haven’t noticed the interest of the thread. I’ll direct you
to the info available in the net.

The first person who tried to help you (Henk Robbers) is another great
programmer that is coding an open source, modern multitasking AES
replacement. He is doing an incredibly good work and it is now in a
quite useable status. He works with his old TT and surely can provide
you with system call documentation about multitasking AES and the
multitasking BSD-like GEMDOS kernel (Mint) that are the modern standard
in Atari computing environment.

The other part of the OS, VDI, hasn’t improved a lot, except for Bezier
curves and vector fonts support (provided by a new GDOS). The two actual
offerings, NVDI commercial) and fVDI (open source) both support True
Color bitmaps, as apparently all VDI versions did in the past."

Henk Robbers gives Tom this bit of info about making programs multi-tasking friendly:

"Put everything including dialogues in windows and your program is perfectly suited for multitasking. Putting stuff in windows surely will automatically force resolution independence. That is basically all there is.

For a GEM program there is no need to know which kernel is running. The AES offers everything you need. Including information about itself.

Do not use the wdialog extensions of MagiC! This software relies on calling back from the AES into application code. This is so preposterously against all rules, that explaining why would mean quoting 50 years of computing history in this medium."

Djorje Vukovic tells Tom a bit about the state of Atari emulators:

"No, there is no such thing (as a TT emulator). The closest hit would probably be the emerging "Aranym" Falcon emulator, but I believe it is still in a very experimental phase.

At least three ST emulators on PC offer extended resolutions (Tosbox, Gemulator, MagicPC), and maybe others do that also. From what people say, I believe that MagicPC would be the best choice for testing various graphic modes in multitasking environment. Tosbox and Gemulator can also run multitasking, but with older versions of Mint. Gemulator and MagicPC are very fast, surpassing in speed real TTs and Falcons. However, the weak point of all ST emulators is floating-point performance which is awful, and I suppose it would be among the more important features for your software."

Citrad Fertr makes a correction or two about Aranym:

"First. Aranym is not an Falcon emulator. Yes, it uses TOS4.04 and it emulates Videl a Falcon IDE, but all these parts will be replaced by native drivers for VDI (already done), XHDI and open source TOS replacement (EmuTOS) in the future.

Second. Aranym is pretty usable, yet. It has full 68040 and (fast !) 68882 emulation, up to 4GB of RAM, hardware accelerated graphic (special fVDI driver), direct or virtual HDD and FDD support and all this is pretty fast.

There is only a few missing parts as sound, networking, MIDI and serial ports."

Well folks, that’s it for this time around. Before I sign off, I’d just like to wish everyone a happy and safe New Year’s celebration. By all means, have yourself a party and whoop it up. But please do it responsibly. If you drink, don’t drive. If you drive, don’t drink. Remember... the life you save may be MINE!<grin>

Tune in again next year, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Sony Games Dominate December!
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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sony Games Dominate Top-Seller List Early December

Video games for Sony Corp.’s consoles outsold the games for its major rivals combined in the first half of December, a crucial sales month for the industry, according to a report released on Wednesday.

Games for the Sony PlayStation2 platform held eight of the top-20 sales spots and represented five of the 10 best-selling titles over that period, according to market research firm, The NPD group.

The top-selling game for the first part of December was "Grand Theft Auto 3," published by Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. for the PS2. ‘‘GTA 3" has been a smash hit despite controversy over its violence, which prompted authorities to ban it earlier this month.

Three of the four Xbox titles that were among the top-selling games in November did not make the early December list. The only Xbox title to carry over was the futuristic war game ‘‘Halo," published by Microsoft.

NPD said seven new game titles entered its top 20 best-seller list for the period from Dec. 2-15, from the last reporting period, which was the full month of November.

Of the top 20 selling games, eight were PS2 titles, four were games for Sony’s earlier PlayStation console, four titles were for Nintendo Co. Ltd.’s Game Boy Advance handheld device and two were games for Nintendo’s GameCube.

One game each for Nintendo’s Game Boy Color and Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox made the list.

The Xbox and GameCube were both launched in mid-November. Game Boy Advance was launched in June. The PS2 was launched in November 2000. Game Boy Color came out in January 1999. The original PlayStation console launched in September 1995.

Among the most noteworthy changes in the December list was the disappearance of November's No. 3 title, ''Luigi's Mansion," for the GameCube. The only other November top-20 GameCube title, ''Star Wars: Rogue Squadron II," also disappeared from the list of early December top-sellers.

Two new GameCube games replaced them in December: ''Super Smash Bros. Melee" and ''Pikmin," both published by Nintendo. They were also the only games released in December to make the list.

Among the independent publishers, Electronic Arts Inc. had five titles on the list, Activision Inc. had three titles and THQ Inc. had two games.

NPD tracks game sales in unit terms based on a selective survey of retailers.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

FBI Computer Security Arm Warns of Windows XP Holes

The FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center has urged users of Microsoft's Windows XP operating system to disable a feature that could leave computers open to attacks from hackers.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the FBI's NIPC, which usually leaves computer security warnings to the private sector, said it held technical discussions with Microsoft Corp. and other industry experts on Friday to identify ways to minimize the risk from security holes in the XP software, which was launched in late October.

A Microsoft spokesman said he had no comment on Monday on the NIPC statement.

The software giant announced last week it had found two vulnerabilities in its new operating system that could leave computers running it open to hackers and at risk of being temporarily shut down from a denial-of-service attack or used in such an attack on other computers.

Under a denial-of-service attack, a server is flooded with so much Internet traffic that it is made inaccessible to legitimate traffic.

In addition to installing the security patch available from Microsoft's Web site, computer users running Windows XP should disable the ''Universal Plug and Play" feature, if they are not using it, the NIPC said in its statement.

Microsoft's Universal Plug and Play software allows devices added to a network to be automatically recognized and accessed. It is installed by default on XP systems, can be switched on in Windows ME systems and

installed separately on the Windows 98 operating systems.

Microsoft and security experts have warned that hackers could take advantage of the feature to gain access to otherwise secure systems by overwhelming computers with data flow, a common method used by hackers.

The way that the software recognizes new machines on a network could also be exploited by hackers to spoof their way into a system and take control in order to launch a denial of service attack, the company and experts said.

The NIPC has issued warnings since Sept. 11 for network administrators to be on alert for possible distributed denial-of-service attacks, which could interfere with e-commerce and slow-down the Internet if serious enough.

Microsoft has said that Windows XP is its most secure operating system ever.

Microsoft has shipped at least 650,000 copies of XP since it was launched Oct. 25, not including units that ship with new PCs, according to marker researcher NPD Intellect.

Stand by for More Nasty Web Attacks in 2002

If security experts are calling 2001 the worst year for computer viruses, and December the worst month, how bad will things get in 2002?

Experts are predicting that viruses and their cousins, the self-propagating worms, will find new and even more nasty ways to attack computer systems, possibly even hitting mobile devices, pocket PCs and smart phones in the coming year.

Computer users should expect to see more viruses that try to dupe them into taking action that will execute the malicious code, said Vincent Weafer, senior director of Symantec Corp.’s security response center.

Virus writers have learned that it’s easy to trick people into opening attachments by telling recipients they are photos of Russian tennis star Anna Kournikova or labeling them ‘‘naked wife."

Other virus ruses included misleading people into believing that by clicking on an attachment they could participate in a survey about the events in Afghanistan, or indicating that it was an antivirus software update from an established vendor.

While such gimmicks were popular, the most damaging virus didn’t spread via e-mail. At an estimated $2.6 billion in damages and 300,000 computers infected, Code Red was the biggest virus this year. It spread by exploiting a known vulnerability in servers running Microsoft Corp.’s Internet Information Server Web software.

This year was the year of the ‘‘blended threat" virus, featuring multiple attack modes such as Nimda, which spread via e-mails and infected Web pages and servers. The more methods of attack, the faster and farther a worm can spread, experts say.

‘‘You’ve traditionally had hacker tools in one corner and virus writers in

another corner," said Weafer. ‘‘Now they’ve come together."

Vincent Gullotto, senior research director of Network Associates Inc.’s antivirus response team, also warned of more attacks that lure computer users to visit infected Web pages.

In such attacks, victims receive e-mails that include Web addresses that, when visited, download malicious code to the computer.

‘‘You don’t have to double click on anything. There’s no attachment," Gullotto said.

Because devices like the Microsoft Corp. Pocket PC 2002 and Nokia Communicator can be plugged into a desktop computer to download information, they are susceptible to some of the same computer viruses and worms that infect PCs, said Mikko Hypponen, manager of anti-virus research for Finnish-based F-Secure Corp.

‘‘The next wave of attacks are not going to come from the PC, but from wireless viruses," George Samenuk, chief executive of Network Associates, told Reuters in an interview recently.

‘‘Less than 5 percent of wireless devices have anti-virus software, while wireless networks are really taking hold," Samenuk said.

Another Network Associates researcher said experts are even more concerned with scripts, or malicious pieces of code, that are transferred between mobile phones via the instant messaging system.

‘‘There are things that can be done today in which you can send a script and it can shut the phone off," said Vincent Gullotto.

But the mobile virus threat was played down by Sophos Anti-Virus senior technical consultant, Graham Cluley.

‘‘Is there a mobile threat? One year after the first warning we haven’t seen a single mobile device virus in the wild," he said.

Cluley added that Sophos has a team looking at mobile viruses, but for 2002 he advised that corporate clients spend their anti-virus budgets in other areas with higher risks.

As of early December, corporations had spent an estimated $12.3 billion to clean up virus damage for the year, according to Computer Economics, a Carlsbad, California, firm that analyzes the economic impact of viruses and other computer security threats.

After Code Red, the second most-costly virus, at an estimated $1 billion, was an e-mail worm dubbed SirCam that exported random documents from infected machines, putting the privacy of computer users at risk.

’You’ve Got Mail,’ More and More, and Mostly, It Is Junk

Unsolicited commercial e-mail, best known by its pejorative appellation, spam, has been annoying Internet users for years. But in the last three months, spam has spiked.

Would you like to lose weight fast? Would you like to make $5,000 a month from your home? How about trying some herbal Viagra, good for men and women?

Yes or no, you are more likely to find such unsolicited offers flooding your e-mail in-box these days than ever before, along with a free trial for professional teeth whitening, a low-rate mortgage and pornography of every flavor. Usually they come from unfamiliar addresses like "Debt Collectors" or Naughty Girl @hotmail.com, and often they single you out by name in the subject line, as in "Amy, Worried About Your Health?"

Such e-mail, best known by its pejorative appellation, spam, has been annoying Internet users for years. But in the last three months, spam has spiked.

One company that specializes in blocking spam, BrightMail, said unsolicited e-mail accounted for 12.8 percent of the mail its corporate clients have received since September, nearly double the share of the previous quarter. A spokesman for America Online, the nation’s largest Internet service provider, said unwanted e-mail was the No. 1 complaint of its subscribers.

No formal count of spam exists for the Internet, but frustrated e-mail users are starting to tabulate their own statistics.

"I used to average maybe 10 a day," Shauna Wright, 34, of San Francisco, complained to an Internet discussion group recently. "Now I’m getting upwards of 9 or 10 times that much."

E-mail economics it costs the sender virtually the same to send 10 messages or 10 million have proven inspirational to peddlers of pyramid schemes and wonder drugs. Even some mainstream marketers have been known to lose restraint when it comes to e-mail advertising.

But for the recipients, it is not free. Deleting spam takes time. Important mail is sometimes lost in efforts to filter it. And just scanning through spam subject lines, which are often sexually explicit and may seem to mysteriously single out the recipient’s own flaws and insecurities, can add a level of irritation to routine e- mail correspondence.

Critics say the deluge of junk e- mail threatens to undermine the utility of the Internet at precisely the time when anthrax fears and cost- cutting efforts have prompted more businesses to use it as a substitute for postal mail.

Marketers worry that people who feel constantly assaulted by junk e- mail are less likely to trust any commercial communication by e-mail, even from businesses they might otherwise be happy to hear from, like a retailer alerting them to a sale on an item they are interested in. To shield themselves from junk e-mail, many Internet users have become increasingly wary of divulging their addresses.

"The real downside is it makes people afraid to participate in electronic life," said Brad Templeton, chairman of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a civil liberties organization. "They don’t want to post to a mailing list or go in a chat room for fear they’ll be inundated with junk mail and won’t have any privacy."

Some mainstream marketers are already beginning to see the effects of

resistance to junk e-mail. Only a year ago, advertisers were raving about the response rates to targeted e-mail, which could reach as high as 20 percent. But that number is falling fast.

"The increase in spam has decreased the overall effectiveness of e-mail marketing," said Donna Hoffman, a professor of marketing and e- commerce at Vanderbilt University. "That trend is clear. Consumers are deleting it before they read it."

"Is it harder to get heard above the noise? It certainly doesn't make it easier," said William Park, chief executive of Digital Impact, which develops promotional e-mail campaigns for clients including Gap Inc., Fidelity and Hewlett-Packard that are directed only at consumers who have signed up to receive it.

Still, critics say some online retailers with well-known brand names also contribute to the problem by automatically adding customers to an e-mail list unless they specifically ask to be kept off.

United Airlines, Amazon.com and Martha Stewart.com, among others, all require customers to uncheck the "yes" box on their Web site that asks if they would like to receive e-mail from them or, in some cases, an unspecified list of advertising "partners." Sometimes, it is not entirely clear that there is a choice involved.

The difficulty of defining spam is one reason efforts to pass federal legislation to stop it have foundered. Critics have compared junk e-mail to unsolicited faxes, which are illegal under a law that was passed when receiving a fax was quite expensive.

That law has never been challenged on constitutional grounds. And it is not clear whether there would be support for such a law for e- mail, which has become an important medium for speech of all kinds.

Is unsolicited e-mail with a political message spam? What about a request from a charity? Does an individual's right to protect the privacy of an in-box trump the free speech rights of marketers?

"If you're saying 'unsolicited' is the problem, I would ask you to think about my favorite example: Here's a one-dollar coupon on Tide sent to everyone in America," said Bob Weintzen, president of the Direct Marketing Association. "I don't think too many people would be upset about that."

Still, protecting the free speech of junk e-mailers comes at a cost, both to privacy and to the bottom line, that appears to be mounting. Earlier this year, the European Union released a study that estimated the worldwide cost of junk e-mail at $8 billion annually. Corporations whose employees use e-mail regularly are having to spend more money on filters to handle the large volumes of traffic. And if every employee spends even a few minutes a day deleting unsolicited e-mail, the labor cost begins to add up.

Spam-watchers attribute the escalation to a combination of factors.

Earlier this fall, the Direct Marketing Association told its 5,000 members to consider using e-mail messages to alert customers worried about anthrax that real mail was on its way. Many of them have.

In addition, in a slumping economy, companies going out of business may be selling their lists of customer e-mail addresses to pay off creditors.

Mailing tactics have also improved. Online marketers have always culled addresses from Web sites, but with the growth of sites like eBay, the online auction service where thousands of people post their e-mail addresses, automated sweeps of the World Wide Web for e-mail addresses are netting more results.

Many now use "dictionary attacks," in which a computer automatically matches combinations of thousands of common words and names with long lists of large domain names (amyfritz@yahoo.com, amyfritz@hotmail.com, amyhar monfritz@excite.com and so on) and sends e-mail messages to all of them, much like telemarketers dialing numbers in sequence. As a result, even people who have made concerted efforts to keep their e-mail addresses private are finding their mailboxes stuffed with suggestions on how to make money fast or reduce their debts simply and easily.

"Everybody is saying they’re getting more spam," said Les Seagraves, the chief privacy officer for Earthlink, a major Internet service provider that recently published a list of tips for customers on how to avoid unwanted e-mail. "Once we plug one hole, many more seem to open."

Like most providers, Earthlink tries to catch junk e-mail before it reaches the in-boxes of its customers, and it prohibits customers from sending spam. But that does not prevent junk e-mailers from signing up for free trial accounts and sending spam until they are kicked off, or forging return addresses to avoid detection.

BrightMail, a San Francisco company that sets up thousands of "bait" e-mail accounts to catch spam before it reaches its clients, is fielding an average of 25,000 unique spam messages a day, compared to 15,000 in the previous quarter the largest increase it has ever recorded. Two years ago, the company found about 5,000 messages each day.

Some seasonal e-mail may subside after the holidays. And certain marketing efforts related to the Sept. 11 attacks, like those pitching nonprescription Cipro, are likely to fade over time.

But the overall level of junk e-mail is expected to increase. Internet users have received an average of 1,466 unsolicited messages this year, according to Jupiter Media Metrix, a research firm, a number expected to grow to 3,800 over the next five years. That is bad news for people who regularly shop online or post messages to discussion forums and already receive that many each month.

Indeed, e-mail spam may finally be living up to its etymology. The term comes from the Monty Python skit about a couple in a restaurant trying to order food while a chorus of Vikings sings "spam spam spam spam, lovely spam, wonderful spam," drowning out all other conversation.

Christian Jensen of Austin, Tex., finally decided to fight back. He wrote a program that blocks all e- mail to himself and the seven employees of the Web services company he founded, unless the sender’s address has been added to a list of acceptable names. Instead, they receive an automated response:

"To confirm that you are a real human and not a spammer, simply hit ‘reply’ to this message," the e- mail says. "Once this message is received on our side, the original message you sent will then be delivered."

For the less technically adept, a cottage industry of screeners has sprung

up, including such firms as Spam Motel, Spam Cop and Spammenot.org. Some e-mail programs, like Yahoo’s, offer built-in spam filtering for e-mail accounts, and others, like Microsoft’s Outlook Express and Eudora, permit users to set up their own.

Marc Fest, 35, of Miami Beach, took a more drastic approach. Last month, he gave up his prize e-mail address, one he has used since 1996: marc@fest.net. People who send him mail there are directed to a Web site where they can send him e-mail, but they will not learn his new address unless he chooses to reply. Mr. Fest’s daily e-mail tally has shrunk to 20 messages from 200. For now.

New Opera Browser Draws Praise

Opera bills itself as ‘‘the fastest browser on earth!" - and indeed it is fast. But to laud it only for its speed would miss the point.

Much more impressive are Opera’s other features for surfing the World Wide Web.

Consider the menu item for quickly deleting cookie files that Web sites leave behind to track you. Or the item for rejecting pop-up windows, such as those pitching wireless cameras from X10.

Version 6.0 of Opera introduces Hotclick, which lets you double-click on any word to get information from Lycos’ dictionary, encyclopedia or language translator.

There are new keyboard combinations that can replace mouse commands and new options for searching and sorting bookmarks.

Icons next to bookmark items now change colors after visiting a site, telling you which sites you haven’t gone to recently.

Enough about the new features. Opera 6.0 might as well be version 1.0 as far as most Internet users are concerned. The browsers, from the Norwegian company Opera Software ASA, are a distant third in usage to Netscape’s Communicator and Microsoft’s Internet Explorer.

Though I find Opera an impressive browser, I’m not ready to completely ditch the others. Opera still has a few compatibility problems, probably because Web designers aren’t yet testing their sites on it.

Opera’s latest edition does include features from earlier versions, like zoom, which lets you enlarge or reduce the size of Web pages. Netscape and Microsoft browsers let you change text size. Zoom changes the graphics as well.

Opera remembers what Web pages you have open when you exit the program. It offers to open them again when you return, complete with your old settings. If the site changed since you left, Opera updates your page.

All major browsers have a set of keyboard shortcuts, such as Ctrl-C to copy or Ctrl-N for a new window.

Opera has more.

The ‘‘1" and ‘‘2" keys move you between windows, while ‘‘z" and ‘‘x" function as the ‘‘back" and ‘‘forward" buttons. Hit ‘‘p" to see how the page might look printed out. Hit ‘‘g" to switch between graphics and text-only modes.

With Opera, you can easily access search engines of your choice. Where the Web address normally goes, just type in ‘‘g harry potter" to find sites on the wizard using the Google search engine. Or type ‘‘z harry potter" to search on Amazon.com. You can add your own search sites and specify your own keywords or letters.

Microsoft’s browser has a similar feature, but you need a special ‘‘Web Accessories" utility. Opera’s comes built-in.

The most notable features, though, are for privacy and graphics.

A menu item called ‘‘File - Delete private data" lets you, with one or two mouse clicks, delete cookies that track you, ‘‘history" files that list where you’ve been and ‘‘cache" files, or copies of sites you’ve recently visited.

Those functions are difficult to find with other browsers. In some cases, you need to locate and delete the correct files on your disk drive - and risk messing up your computer.

Another menu item, called ‘‘File - Quick preferences," lets you easily block pop-ups, or have them open behind Web pages as ‘‘pop-unders" instead. You can also turn off certain animation and video - the type typically used in advertisements.

The function doesn’t seem to work, though, with the ads supplied by Opera.

Which brings up the issue of cost. While Microsoft and Netscape give away their browsers, Opera sells them for $39.

A free version is available, but you’ll have to endure ads and lose about a quarter-inch of vertical space.

Opera’s browser also comes packaged with e-mail and instant messaging (using your existing ICQ account), as well as a slideshow similar to Microsoft’s PowerPoint (you’ll need to know some HTML programming).

The standard download is only 3.2 megabytes, or 10.7 MB with Java. Netscape and Microsoft’s browser packages typically run 20 to 25 MB.

Opera does have its faults.

Third-party plug-ins designed to enhance Web browsing are typically designed only for Netscape and Microsoft browsers. Though Opera can use Netscape plug-ins, I had to look deep in Opera’s help Web site to figure that out.

Also, some Web sites don’t work well with Opera.

Though Opera says it follows standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium, Web sites themselves don’t always comply, and they generally test their sites only with Microsoft and Netscape browsers.

While there are sites that work with Opera but not Netscape, many don’t work with Opera at all. Microsoft’s MSN sites, for instance, were

temporarily blocked from Opera browsers some weeks back; its Hotmail feature still generates a compatibility warning.

Opera gets complicated in trying to be so flexible. There are so many choices that it takes time to figure them out. Perhaps over time I'll get more comfortable.

OS X Update Embraces Gadgets

Apple Computer has released another update for its Mac OS X operating system, adding more support for peripherals such as digital cameras.

Version 10.1.2 of OS X is available for download via Apple's Web site. According to Apple, the update includes:

Support for more devices with universal serial bus and FireWire connections, including FireWire-equipped digital cameras.

Support for storage devices based on the PC Card format, including media readers, that are useful for shuttling data between digital cameras and laptops.

Version 2.0 of AirPort, Apple's wireless networking technology.

Software drivers for using infrared modems in PowerBook laptops equipped with FireWire connections.

Version 1.3.22 of the open-source Apache Web server software.

Assorted improvements for audio, networking, printing and display.

Apple released OS X in March, amid considerable hype and speculation. Built on an entirely new software base, the Unix-based OS X was considered the most important upgrade of the Mac operating system since the first version came out in 1984.

The initial OS X release attracted some criticism, however, for lacking key technologies, such as support for CD burners and DVD playback.

Those functions and numerous others were included when Apple released in October the first major update to the software: OS X version 10.1. The update boosted consumer confidence in the OS and prompted major software developers to show increased interest in creating OS X applications.

The release turned somewhat sour for Apple, however, when some Mac enthusiasts found a way to convert the free upgrade into a full version of the operating system.

HP Exec Files Anti-Merger Papers

The Hewlett-Packard Co. board member leading the fight against the company's $22 billion plan to buy Compaq Computer Corp. said in a filing Thursday he originally voted for the deal only to help HP secure a good price.

After blasting the deal for two months, Walter Hewlett gave the Securities and Exchange Commission a preliminary copy of the proxy statement he will use to ask shareholders to vote against the plan. HP and Compaq already have filed their version seeking yes votes.

Hewlett, oldest son of the late HP co-founder William Hewlett, said he first heard chairwoman and CEO Carly Fiorina was negotiating a deal with Compaq in May, and voiced concern about it at board meetings over the next few months.

Negotiations with Compaq went on, however, and on Aug. 31, HP attorney Larry Sonsini told the board that the terms being finalized required the directors' unanimous support. Hewlett said he told the board he was in a tough spot, because he was not convinced the acquisition was good.

According to Hewlett's filing, Sonsini asked Hewlett to step outside the board meeting, and told him HP would go ahead with the acquisition whether or not Hewlett went along. However, he said, Hewlett's opposition could force HP to renegotiate the terms and possibly pay more for Compaq.

Hewlett said Sonsini told him he could approve the deal as a board member and vote against it as a shareholder. Hewlett agreed, deciding he should do all he could to help HP negotiate the best possible price - even for a deal he opposed.

Despite joining in the unanimous support for the deal, Hewlett said he reminded his fellow board members hours before it was announced on Sept. 3 that he likely would vote his shares against it.

Sonsini and HP representatives did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

HP and Compaq believe merging will make them a leader in key technology segments, improve their offerings for corporate customers and speed their pace of innovation. The companies are awaiting regulatory approval before setting a date for a shareholder vote.

Hewlett believes the deal is too risky, would increase HP's reliance on the weak personal computer business and dilute the contribution of HP's profitable printing division. He said his opinion has been bolstered by the negative reaction from many analysts and investors.

''To undertake the proposed merger is to make a big, long-term, bet-the-company move," Hewlett's filing says. ''We would prefer HP to focus on what it does well, and to change and grow organically, with targeted tactical acquisitions, which has been the strategy of most successful technology companies."

The opposition camp includes various Hewlett and Packard family interests with 18 percent of HP stock, including the Packard family charitable foundation, which is HP's largest shareholder; and an independent stock committee of the Hewlett family foundation.

Dubious Achievement Awards for 2001

By Larry Blasko, Associated Press Writer

Santa Claus doesn't visit personal computing companies, so those that require a ton or so of coal in their corporate stockings must depend upon the CompuBug Dubious Achievement Awards. Here's the list for 2001:

The Lay The Rails Six Inches Farther Apart Traincar Sales Promotion award goes to Microsoft for Windows XP, which won't run applications customers already own and have been using for years. Since software doesn't wear out, the only way you are going to sell more of it is to obsolete the old stuff by making certain almost all new PCs sold have an incompatible operating system. That's why many users are convinced that the XP in WIndows XP stands for eXPletive.

The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Only God Can Make A Tree (And He'd Better Get Busy) award goes to software package designers that have taken to putting one or more cover flaps on their already ridiculously big software boxes. What a splendid way to waste even more wood pulp! Plus, it gives even more room to hide the system requirements in tiny type.

The Most Annoying award goes to those companies whose pop-up and pop-under ads make surfing the Web like walking through a minefield. A companion Baby Don't Go award is given to those companies who flip you to another endless pitch page when you try to use the back button of your browser.

X10 Wireless Technologies, Inc. of Seattle, Wash., gets the Nudge-Nudge-Wink-Wink Marketing award, for its annoying pop ads that feature young women with come-hither looks and the implication that the tiny video camera may be used to monitor bedroom antics.

The New Feature Desperation award goes to the folks at Logitech who gave us the iFeel Mouse, a computer mouse that let's you ''feel" the desk top by moving itself when the cursor crosses an icon. Although it might -- emphasis on might -- be of some help to the visually impaired, for most of us it's a feature in search of a purpose.

The Oh By The Way award goes to those companies which, when confronted with an error in their preprinted installation manuals, try to fix it with a one-page insert in the packaging -- which you may or may not see in time to avoid a botched installation.

Finally, as always, the Patience of Job award to all the marketers and public relations folk who endure my gruff irritability in an uphill effort to make me seem smarter than I am.

Questions and comments are welcome. Send them to Larry Blasko, AP, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020-1666. Or e-mail lblasko(at)ap.org.

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